



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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### State Land Protection Project Expands Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area

#### *Key Parcel Preserves Base of Tully Mountain and Important Wildlife Habitat*

ORANGE - Conservation partners from the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, the town of Orange, and sportsmen's organizations today celebrated the protection of 41 acres of land located within the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife's 1,300-acre Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

"This is a signature property that protects the base of Tully Mountain and the view from the summit, and ensures that the heart of the Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area will be protected forever," Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner Mary Griffin said. "I would especially like to thank the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust for acquiring this property and working with us to ensure its conservation. The Patrick Administration recently announced its commitment to spending of at least \$50 million annually for the next five years on state open space programs, so we can continue our land conservation efforts with projects like these."

The land, a 41-acre lot directly east of the Mount Tully summit, was purchased by DFG for \$415,000. It is mostly forested, with eight acres of meadow surrounding a small pond. The property includes two intermittent streams and habitat for songbirds, wide-ranging mammals, uncommon amphibians and other fauna. Conservation of this land adds to a protected, contiguous core of 9,000 acres conserved through the Tully Initiative. Surrounding a house (which will eventually be removed) are fields that offer excellent views of Tully Mountain and the hills to the east. The fields also provide access to the Tully Trail, a 22-mile loop running through the WMA that connects to the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Warwick.

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“It is particularly satisfying to participate in conserving land that has so much value ecologically and is so meaningful to so many people,” said Leigh Youngblood, Executive Director of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. “Tully Mountain is one of the most widely recognized landmarks in the North Quabbin region and is the most popular natural recreation area in the Town of Orange. Many landowners – including the children of Richard and Fern Partridge, Roy Wetmore and the Wetmore family, Peter Gerry, Walt Hubbard, Fred Heyes, and the Foyes – deserve our generous thanks for making this a place all can continue to enjoy.”

The Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area now comprises more than 1,300 acres, with about 900 acres north of Tully village and another 400 acres south of it. The area’s topography ranges from steep slopes and mountain tops to flat open land and wetlands. Open fields, abandoned brushy fields, and forested tracts of mixed hardwoods and softwoods provide a wide variety of habitat types. The West Branch of Tully River, a stocked trout stream, runs through the property, which also includes other small streams and wetlands. The habitat supports stocked pheasant, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, black bear, raccoon, woodcock, songbirds, amphibians and other wildlife. The acreage south of the village is comprised of conservation easements that DFG has acquired from private owners in recent years. This area remains private property but cannot be developed further, and is open to the public for passive recreation. One of the parcels south of the village protects most of Little Tully Mountain, including the summit.

“Land protection is a top priority of mine and it is wonderful to see that this property will be part of a conservation area and open to people who enjoy the outdoors,” said Senator Stephen Brewer. “Those of you here today are to be commended for the ongoing effort to protect the natural resources of the North Quabbin region.”

“I am happy to see that the Commonwealth’s environmental agencies are working with local partners such as the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in protecting open space, which is greatly appreciated by the people of Orange and throughout my district,” said Representative Christopher Donelan.

The DFG spent \$7.6 million to protect more than 4,000 acres statewide in fiscal year 2007. The department has about \$10 million to spend on land acquisition in the current fiscal year. DFG’s Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) manages more than 164,000 acres in the Commonwealth, including 21,600 acres in the Connecticut Valley Wildlife District. Since 2001, the agency has protected more than 7,500 acres in the Connecticut Valley District. The department has acquired, in cooperation with Mount Grace, 12 properties or conservation easements since 1998 in establishing the Tully Mountain WMA. DFW also manages the 1,534-acre Orange Wildlife Management Area, located south and west of the Tully WMA.

“This is a beautiful property that provides habitat for a wide variety of native wildlife and great recreational opportunities for people who enjoy hiking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation,” said Division of Fisheries & Wildlife Director Wayne MacCallum. “I would like to thank the state’s sportsmen for their contribution to this project as the funds for this acquisition came from the Wildlands Stamp fund, which is supported by a \$5 charge on the sale of fishing, hunting, and sporting licenses sold in Massachusetts.”

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Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust ([www.mountgrace.org](http://www.mountgrace.org)) is a regional land trust that serves 23 towns in Franklin and Worcester Counties and is supported by memberships and private, state and federal grants. It protects significant natural, agricultural and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in north-central and western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy and future generations. In 20 years, through collaborations and partnerships, Mount Grace has protected more than 20,000 acres – 10 percent of protected land in the region.

The DFG and its Division of Fisheries & Wildlife's land conservation program target the most ecologically valuable habitats in Massachusetts. The agency utilizes state open space bond funds and revenue from the Wildlands stamp for land purchases. The Wildlands stamp is funded by a \$5 charge on the sale of fishing, hunting, and sporting licenses sold in Massachusetts, providing about \$1.3 million each year for the protection of open space. Since 1990, the Wildlands fund has provided \$22.3 million and resulted in the acquisition and permanent protection of 25,600 acres in the Commonwealth. For more information on the Commonwealth's land conservation efforts, visit [http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/habitat/land/land\\_acquisitions.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/habitat/land/land_acquisitions.htm).

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